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BILL STANLEY
VIRGINIA SENATE

To Those in Attendance at the 3rd Annual Fur Ball
And Dedicated Members of Freedom's Last Chance:

April 11, 2014

Good Evening to All:

I want to thank all of you who are here attending the 3rd Annual Fur Ball to benefit the great voluntary efforts of Freedom's Last Chance. I am sorry that I could not be with you tonight.

Animals are one of man's greatest gifts from his Creator, and it is likewise our obligation to care for them. Freedom's Last Chance continues to provide critically needed health and rescue services for dogs and cats in our area. You give a voice to the voiceless, you speak for them and remind us all of the need to protect them from harm. Without organizations such as Freedom's Last Chance, many animals would not be given the chance to thrive among us on this good Earth.

Last year, I promised you that I would make companion animal issues a priority. And I did. This year in the Virginia General Assembly, protection of companion animals was a significant issue. I introduced two bills regarding pets: one was a bill to create an "Animal Abuser Registry," that would give the public access to a public registry of those persons who had committed the most heinous crimes against animals; my second bill was to create a state funded spay and neuter fund program to provide low-cost spay and neutering service to pet owners who otherwise could not afford such a procedure, which in turn would reduce the number of unwanted animals and kill rates in our local shelters. These bills have started very important conversations in the halls of the Capitol that I believe will result in the passage of these pieces of legislation next year. One piece of important legislation that did pass this year was a bill that protected pet owners from unscrupulous dealers or "puppy mill" operators who sell owners sick animals. This law will make the dealers pay for the costs and veterinary expenses incurred by the owner in restoring the health of the pet.

But more important than any law could ever be, is the work of the volunteer community in the protection of our domesticated animals. With your continued support, Freedom's Last Chance will be able to provide more animals that "last chance" they would otherwise not have. There can be no nobler a task than to help those animals who cannot help themselves. You are truly my heroes.

My father used to say that if people were like dogs, we would be a better place: that is to say, if humans could demonstrate the perfect love, perfect loyalty and perfect forgiveness of a dog, we would live in a near perfect world. But it is because we aspire to (but never quite achieve) those traits found so readily in a dog, that we owe them all this solemn oath to care for and protect them from harm, so that we may one day repay them for the love, loyalty and forgiveness they give us each and every day.

Have a great night, and once again God Bless You for your dedication and service to all of God's beloved creatures.

Warmest regards;

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a long tail on the final 'l'.

William M. Stanley
Senator, 20th District